

Chairman Sales and members of the Committee

My name is Bonnie Kelley. B O N N I E K E L L E Y and I reside in Frenchtown MT.

Last month I spoke here in support of SB202, and you know that I believe in death with dignity and patient autonomy at the end of life. Now I am here again, having gotten up at 3am to start my day for an 9am hearing. I thank the committee for giving me a voice in our democracy.

HB477 is very explicit about wanting doctors, loved ones, and hospice providers to rot in jail for ten years. The woman from Seattle who wrote this bill has one goal and that is to overturn the Montana Supreme Court *Baxter* decision and take away my right to death with dignity, a freedom that has existed for 5 years in Montana without any instance of abuse.

Please do not fall victim to the fear mongering and wild speculation that people who want to take this right away are saying. Oregon has had death with dignity for 17 years without any problems. Not one single person has even been charged with a crime associated with aid in dying. This fact is indisputable.

If suicide is your concern, I ask you to pass laws that address the important unmet mental health needs in this state. If elder abuse is your concern, then vote for laws that punish those convicted of elder abuse, which occurs in many forms, with appropriate penalties.

HB477 does nothing to address mental health issues or elder abuse. It does only one thing. It restricts my constitutionally protected right to privacy and dignity: rights the lower courts specifically affirmed and that the Supreme Court refused to overturn. The public policy in this nanny-state bill says that we citizens are not autonomous beings. With a patronizing pat on my head, the bill says "government knows best."

I'll leave you with one question to ponder. Did the patriots who jumped from the twin towers on 9-11 commit suicide or did they simply choose a less scary and perhaps less painful death than one by smoke and fire? I think you know the answer.

Please vote no on House Bill 477. Thank you.